



BfK Briefing ? January 1998

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NEWS

New Government - New Initiatives?

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BfK invites Gary McKeone, Literature Director, Arts Council of England, to explain what he expects from New Labour:

?In November past I attended the Paul Hamlyn Foundation Awards for Artists. Five poets received fifteen thousand pounds each. In his passionate address, Adrian Mitchell, one of the judges, pointed out that the average annual income of the hundreds of poets who applied was twelve thousand five hundred pounds. The figures are sadly eloquent.

We must cherish our writers, not through the tokenism of sporadic prizes, but by developing new and sustained ways of offering financial support. The government has a role to play in this. Let?s work together, government and Arts Council, to devise imaginative tax relief schemes for writers. Let?s look at helpful pension schemes for writers. Let?s explore innovative schemes in other countries and, magpie-like, pick the best examples for our own writers. The arts funding system does many good things for literature but we must now put the writer back at the centre of our efforts.

These are long term plans. More immediately I would ask Chris Smith and Mark Fisher to spearhead a drive to set up a Writers Awards Trust Fund. The Arts Council offers fifteen awards annually of seven thousand pounds each. It helps but it?s not enough. Let?s aim for fifty awards per year at fifteen thousand pounds each. With effort and commitment we can reduce the need for the ?beautiful begging letters?.

Count Down to the 1998-99 National Year of Reading

* Books Etc has become a sponsor of the charity Reading is Fundamental. It will sponsor 20 literacy projects in schools around London.

* The Bookstart Books for Babies project is to receive £150,000 over the next three years from the Basic Skills Agency to support its work encouraging parents to share books with very young children.

* Everyman?s Library is to denote sets of 250 books and six CD-Roms (?masterclasses on language and literature?) to the 4,500 secondary schools in the UK, following a £4 million award from the Millennium Commission. Everyman is to match the lottery funding for the project through sales and sponsorship.

A leaflet is available on how to get involved in the National Year of Reading. Free from DfEE, Sanctuary Buildings, Great Smith Street, London SW1P 3BT.

Dahl is Top (Again)

Roald Dahl (1,957 votes) was voted the nation's favourite modern children's author in a poll conducted by Treasure Islands before its demise. The rest of the top ten were Goosebumps author, R L Stine (1,052), Dick King-Smith (412), Jacqueline Wilson (340), Terry Pratchett (168), Judy Blume (154), Anne Fine (121), Animal Ark's 'Lucy Daniels' (103), Shirley Hughes (103) and Robert Westall (63). A total of 357 authors received votes but of these 185 had to rely on their mum to be included; they received only one vote.

Treasure Islands Sinks

The popular Radio 4 programme, **Treasure Islands**, dedicated to children's books, is to be replaced by an hour-long general arts programme in which books coverage will be divided between adult and children's. A proposal from the **Treasure Islands** team for a specific children's book programme has been turned down. **BfK** finds it astounding that in the run-up to the National Year of Reading, children's books should get the short end of the stick from the broadcasters.

EVENTS

Junior Education Children's Books Festival

This will be held on Wednesday, 11th March from 10am to 4pm at Cheltenham Town Hall, Gloucestershire. Morning speakers include Philip Pullman, Shirley Hughes and Michael Morpurgo. Afternoon sessions will be run by Neil Ardley, Michael Foreman, Shirley Hughes, Rosalind Kerven, Colin McNaughton, Michael Morpurgo, Brian Moses, Grace Nichols, Korky Paul and Jacqueline Wilson.

Cost £20, lunch not included. Application forms are available from Junior Education, Scholastic Ltd, Villiers House, Clarendon Avenue, Leamington Spa, Warwickshire CV32 5PR. Closing date Monday, 16th February.

PEOPLE

The Department for Education and Employment has invited the National Literacy Trust to set up the team to organise the National Year of Reading. In a bold and imaginative move, **Liz Attenborough** has been appointed its Project Director. Attenborough was formerly Publisher, Penguin Children's Books; she is a regular contributor to **BfK**.

Charles Keeping (1924-1988) has been commemorated with a blue plaque on the Keeping family home in Bromley, Kent. One of the best known illustrators of the 1960s and 1970s, Keeping worked mainly in black or coloured inks to create a strongly atmospheric imaginative world.

Catherine Blanchard, head of children's services at Hertfordshire Libraries, has been appointed Chief Librarian at Leeds.

Domenica de Rosa has been appointed Editorial Director for children's fiction at HarperCollins. De Rosa previously worked in the educational division. She will report directly to head of children's publishing, **Kate Harris**. Publishing director **Gail Penston** remains in charge of picture books and properties. Meanwhile, **Jane Friedman**, formerly of Knopf, has been appointed president and chief executive of HarperCollins with responsibility for HarperCollins publishing worldwide. **Anthea Disney**, the deadlines disciplinarian, becomes Chairman and Chief Executive of the News America Publishing Group, a new division of New Corporation.

Ladybird Books has appointed **Michael Herridge** Publishing Director. He was previously Creative Director at World International.

Following **Lindsey Fraser's** surprise resignation from Book Trust Scotland, **Kathryn Ross** has been appointed Acting Executive Director. Fraser's longterm plans are 'on the hazy side'.

Chris Kloet, formerly editorial director of the Gollancz children's list, has left Penguin to pursue a freelance career.

Jo Shiel, Waterstone's children's book specialist, has left to take up a post with Daisy & Tom in Manchester. There are

no plans to replace her.

After 60 years of eating Cow Pie (horns included), **Desperate Dan** has left the **Dandy**. Mad cow disease or just another redundancy?

And, as **BfK** goes to press, rumour has it that, despite interest from Ravensburger Buchverlag, Penguin is, after all, about to acquire Reed Children's Books ...

OBITUARY

Margaret Potter (1916-1997)

With her husband, Alexander Potter, Margaret Potter collaborated on writing and illustrating educational books including the 'Puffin Building Books' for Allen Lane's innovative new series of Puffin Picture Books in the 1940s. Their pen and pencil drawings, particularly of buildings, were scrupulously accurate and often enlivened with humorously observed detail.

PRIZES

The Kurt Maschler Award

The 1997 award for 'a work ... in which text and illustration are integrated so that each enhances and balances the other?' has been won by William Mayne's **Lady Muck**, illustrated by Joanathan Heale (Heinemann). The judges were Louis Baum of **The Bookseller**, writer and former **BfK** editor, Chris Powling, and academic Margaret Meek. Chris Powling commented: '**Lady Muck** is Mayne mimicry at his read-aloud best, alongside gloriously piggy woodcuts.'

The 1997 SEN Book Award

This (Special Education Needs) Award has been won by **Charlie's Eye** (reviewed **BfK 104**) by Dorothy Horgan (Hamish Hamilton). Commended books were Elaine Forrestal's **Someone Like Me** (Puffin), Elizabeth Arnold's **Gold and Silver Water** (Mammoth) and Philip Ridley's **Scribbleboy** (Puffin).

Excele Awards for Black Publishing

Nine lifetime achievement awards were presented at a literary banquet to, amongst others, Jessica and Eric Huntley, founders of Bogle L'Ouverture and the publishers of some of Britain's first children's books for a multi-racial society. Verna Wilkins, founder of Tamarind Press, was also honoured. The award for the best children's book went to Malorie Blackman for **Hacker** (Transworld).

Wirral Paperback of the Year Award

The 1997 award, chosen by young readers from ten Wirral LEA secondary schools, has been won by Sue Welford's **The Shadow of August** (Mammoth) - see review **BfK 107**.

Whitbread Children's Book of the Year

Titles shortlisted are **Junk** by Melvin Burgess (Andersen Press), **Chasing Redbird** by Sharon Creech (Macmillan), **Aquila** by Andrew Norriss (Hamish Hamilton) and **Harry and the Wrinklies** by Alan Temperley (Scholastic Press). The judges include poet and novelist Helen Dunmore and novelist Anne Fine.

Guardian Children's Fiction Prize

Members of the 1998 panel, chaired by Julia Eccleshare, are last year's winner, Melvin Burgess, **BfK** editor, Rosemary Stones, and writers Anthony Masters and Gillian Cross.

1998 BFC Mother Goose Award

Entries should be submitted by the end of February 1998. The Award is open to all British illustrators publishing a first major book for children between 1st March 1997 and 28th February 1998. For further details please contact Marisa Ryder at **Books For Children**, 4 Furzegound Way, Stockley Park, Uxbridge UB11 1DP.

Unesco Prize

The deadline for nominations for the 1999 Unesco Prize for Children and Young People's Literature in the Service of Tolerance is 31st December. Books published in 1996 and 1997 are eligible. Details from Gloria Bailey at the PA (0171 565 7474).

PUBLICATIONS

Cracking Good Books: Teaching Literature at Key Stage 2 by Judith Graham, NATE, 0 901291 51 X, £16.50. From Paton Walsh's **Thomas and the Tinnern** to Alfred Noyes' **The Highwayman**, Graham's imaginative selection of titles is revealed to be most apposite for student interpretation, discussion and activity for which she makes useful suggestions.

Practical Ways to Inspire Young Authors by Angela Redfern and Viv Edwards, Reading and Language Information Centre, 0 7049 1261 9 £4.50. From The University of Reading, Bulmershe Court, Earley, Reading RG6 1HY. A short booklet that focuses on the teacher's responsibility to create a rich writing environment and effective classroom practice.

Young Writer, editor Kate Jones, is a termly magazine dedicated to publishing children's writing and suggesting writing activities. There are author interviews, poetry, short fiction and book reviews. Subscription in UK £6.50. From Glebe House, Church Road, Weobley, Hereford HR4 8SD.

Waterstone's Guide to Books for the National Curriculum (£4.99 from Waterstone's branches) contains 300 recommendations for core subjects, foundation subjects and additional subjects such as personal and social education at Key Stages 1 and 2.

Books for Students

BEST SELLER CHART

TOP 10 CLASSICS

January to December 1997

1. **The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe**, C S Lewis, Collins
2. **Charlotte's Web**, E B White, Puffin
3. **The Iron Man**, Ted Hughes, Faber
4. **The Hobbit**, J R R Tolkien, Collins
5. **The Secret Garden**, Frances Hodgson Burnett, Puffin
6. **The Railway Children**, E Nesbit, Puffin
7. **The Magician's Nephew**, C S Lewis, Collins
8. **Tom's Midnight Garden**, Philippa Pearce, Puffin
9. **The Wind in the Willows**, Kenneth Grahame, Puffin

10. Swallows and Amazons, Arthur Ransome, Red Fox

It is encouraging to see 'modern' classics such as **The Iron Man** (1968) alongside titles from the first decade of the 20th century in this list.

This listing has been specially compiled for **BfK** by **Books for Students** from their sales data. **Books for Students Ltd** is a major specialist supply company to schools and libraries.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Those Vital Schools Library Services

Dear Editor

Congratulations on a sterling editorial in **BfK** 106.

Apropos of your advice to Chris Smith and Mark Fisher you might like to know that organisations representing Schools Library Services met with Mark Fisher recently. We raised the issues affecting schools library services and, whilst we sought to be positive, he was left in no doubt of the importance of ensuring that SLSs are successful, relevant and able to adequately support the work of schools. A useful strategy would be closer links between DCMS and the DfEE. In fact, Mark Fisher and Stephen Byers have a meeting shortly, and Mark Fisher indicated he would raise the issue of schools library services at this meeting and aim for on-going dialogue, recognising the role SLSs can play in the education process. This will be a start!

The delegation to the meeting included the Schools Library Association, the Association of Senior Children's and Education Librarians, the Schools Libraries Group of The Library Association and myself representing LAHQ. We have all prioritised advocacy work with the DfEE, DCMS, other relevant departments (such as the Scottish Office and the Welsh Office), education quangos such as Ofsted and SCAA/QCA, the Audit Commission working party on LEA support services, the Royal Family, the Education Select Committee of the House of Commons and so on. There is so much to do, but there are positive signs which we need to build on.

Just a small point. Whilst Graham Small's report identifies many concerns about SLSs, unfortunately some printing errors occurred in the report. The body of the report identifies, I think, that about 12% of LEAs do not provide an SLS, whilst the summary uses the figure of 25%. For 1996/97, LISU figures, courtesy of Claire Creaser, indicate that of 177 local authorities in the UK, 13 authorities do not have a service, so the actual percentage is low. Just a small point, but ASCEL, SLG, SLA and LAHQ are concerned that SLSs are not talked down: we all recognise that we need to be positive and proactive if we are to meet the challenges of all the new educational initiatives - indeed, many colleagues join me in thinking there is much to be positive about.

Anthony Tilke

Professional Adviser, Youth and School Libraries, The Library Association, 7 Ridgmount Street, London WC1E 7AE

Using Big Books

Dear Editor

As a user of Big Books I was delighted to see them now featuring in your review section. The real value of Big Books is as a means of a whole class sharing a story and learning to read, a fact now recognised in the Literacy Hour. Therefore the text must be enlarged sufficiently for every child to read easily. Reps. have proudly shown me Big Books that would fail in my small class of 12 let alone in a class of 30 plus.

The Big Book market desperately needs expanding but please publishers before you rush your best sellers into big format consider the child in the back row of a large class grouped in front of their teacher and the Big Book. It is not

enough to just 'blow up' the pages; the size and spacing of the letters, words and lines must be adjusted to enable that child to read as easily as the child in the front. Spacing is all important as the child must be able to distinguish every letter and word pointed at. I have seen texts where from a distance 'cl' is indistinguishable from 'd' and 'ri' becomes 'n'.

These factors become even more important in books aimed at older pupils where the temptation is to overload a page with text.

Could I ask that publishers consult with everyday classroom teachers who are using Big Books, not educational experts, otherwise there are going to be some very disappointed purchasers of Big Books in the near future.

Maggie Sutton

Brighton

White Author/Black Characters ...continued

Dear Editor

At the risk of sounding smug I have to say that my experience has been different from that of Jean Ure (**BfK 105**). One editor was wary when I approached her with the idea for **The Jessame Stories**, expressing reservations such as Jean describes, but I wrote the book anyway and luckily the first editor I showed it to, Rosemary Debnam at Heinemann, accepted it more quickly than she'd ever accepted anything before - or has since! Reviews have been positive, sales good and the sequel **More Jessame Stories**, appeared this summer.

My only problem with **The Jessame Stories** has been being ignored at Hull station by a teacher meeting me for an author visit; she wasn't expecting a white face. A bonus has been both books' enthusiastic reception by the family of Vanessa Aduke Olusanya, the young teacher who was their inspiration.

Julia Jarman

Bedford

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